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Chapter One

It was a quiet night throughout the woods. Nothing but the sound of an owl hooting in the distance could be heard. Moonlight shone through the trees. The night was peaceful.

All of a sudden, the silence was broken as the sound of heavy pawsteps thundered through the woods. A grey tom trudged through the woods, a pained expression clouding his face.

Stupid she-cat, he thought. *I can't believe she would choose Brambleclaw over me. Fox-hearted heap of mouse-dung.*

Ashfur felt as though a wildfire blazed within him. He had never felt such strong rage and hatred. But beneath his feelings of anger toward Squirrelflight, one feeling remained- grief.

It felt as though a tiger's claws were slicing through his heart. Every part of his body ached with sadness. Squirrelflight was his only chance to be happy, and it was all ruined.

A sob formed in Ashfur's throat as he sat down by the lake. He looked down and saw his reflection in the waves. He was a mess. He was ill-groomed and sleep deprived.

Ashfur stifled a wail. He had never felt such immense pain. Seeing Squirrelflight with the son of the cat who had killed his mother had brought back such horrible memories.

He gave his head a quick shake, feeling his eyes stinging with tears. With a hiss, Ashfur brought his paw down to the water and struck it through his reflection. Water splashed everywhere. Small droplets got on his pelt.

Ashfur growled and gave his pelt a shake, sending the droplets flying in all directions. He didn't think he'd ever understand how RiverClan cats could tolerate getting their paws wet. He leaned over and started grooming his pelt, something hardly got around to ever

since the whole incident with Squirrelflight, when he suddenly heard soft pawsteps along the shore of the lake.

Ashfur perked up his ears. He rose to his paws, his hackles starting to raise slightly. His mouth gaped slightly in attempt to inhale the scent of the stranger.

Silver moonlight outlined the silhouette of a cat a few fox-lengths away from Ashfur. Ashfur craned his neck, trying to get a better view. He inhaled through his noise, and then a jolt of annoyance shot through him as he caught a whiff of the cat ahead.

RiverClan! Ashfur thought, flexing his claws and preparing himself for a fight. *What is a RiverClan cat doing so close to the border?*

Suddenly, the dark figure of a cat came a few pawsteps closer. He was still quite a distance from Ashfur, but close enough at this point for Ashfur to see him more clearly.

Moonlight shone down upon the strange cat, shining down on a dark brown tabby pelt. He had an underbelly that was the color of newly-fallen snow, which stood out from the rest of his dark fur. He sat down by the shore of the lake and let out a small sigh.

Ashfur started trotting toward the RiverClan cat, ready to confront him for being so close to the ThunderClan border. But when the cat looked over at him, making eye-contact, something about his ice-blue eyes made Ashfur feel relaxed and secure. The fur rising on his back began to settle.

"What are you doing so close to the border?" the brown cat asked, his voice sounding calm, but cold, like snow falling on the first day of leaf-bare.

Ashfur's tail twitched. "I could ask the same of you," he retorted, although his tone wasn't angry.

"I'm waiting for my half-brother," the cat responded. "Brambleclaw. He was supposed to meet me here."

Then it clicked. "I know who you are. You're Hawkfrost," Ashfur stated.

"Yes, I am," Hawkfrost replied, not seeming to care about Ashfur's realization. "You're a ThunderClan cat, right? Do you know where he might be? He was supposed to be here a while ago."

Ashfur felt as though a thorn pierced his heart. "You won't be seeing him anytime soon," Ashfur growled. "He's too busy cuddling with his new mate, Squirrelflight."

Hawkfrost's eyes blazed, but only for a moment. "Squirrelflight," he spat. "I always hated that she-cat. He could have had any other she-cat as a mate."

Agreed, Ashfur thought. *I don't know what I saw in her in the first place.*

All of a sudden, there was movement in the water. Hawkfrost perked up his ears, and instinctively dropped into a hunter's crouch. Ashfur tilted his head, intrigued. All seemed completely silent, with only the sound of the water splashing up against the shore.

Suddenly, in a burst of movement, Hawkfrost launched a paw into the water, sending a fish leaping out. Hawkfrost reared onto his hind legs and caught the fish in midair with his front claws. He brought the fish the the ground, killing it with one swift bite. Panting, Hawkfrost sat down and set the fresh-kill on the ground.

"That was impressive," Ashfur commented.

Hawkfrost's whiskers twitched. "It was improvised, mostly. It wasn't a real RiverClan hunting move."

"Which makes it even more impressive, the way you acted on impulse and actually succeeded," Ashfur went on.

Hawkfrost nudged the fish over to Ashfur. "Care for a bite?"

As a ThunderClan cat, the fish didn't look so appetizing to Ashfur. Still, he was flattered by Hawkfrost's polite gesture. He purred warmly at him.

Then Ashfur broke eye contact. *What am I thinking? This is the son of the cat that killed my mother, the brother of the cat that stole*

Squirrelflight away from me, and a RiverClan *cat.*

"No, thanks," Ashfur snorted, looking away.

Hawkfrost's whiskers twitched. "More for me, then." He leaned over and started tearing into the fish.

Ashfur started rising to his paws, until he heard Hawkfrost ask, "So, what brings you so close to the border in the middle of the night?"

Ashfur looked at him. His mouth was open, but no words came out.

Hawkfrost narrowed his eyes into icy slits. "Well? I told you my reason. I suppose it's only fair I receive an explanation to why you're out so late."

"I– I'm just going for a walk," Ashfur explained. "To clear my head."

Ashfur expected him to keep pressing, but Hawkfrost simply just nodded and said, "Understandable."

Hawkfrost beckoned Ashfur over with a twitch of his tail. "Sit, now that you're here."

Ashfur was stunned. "But the border–"

"You don't have to cross the border, now, do you?" Hawkfrost asked. "There's enough space between us for you to still remain on your own territory."

Ashfur reluctantly sat down next to Hawkfrost, and the two of them sat in comfortable silence. For a moment, Ashfur forgot about all of his worries about Squirrelflight.

But the silence was soon broken by another set of pawsteps, bolting along the lake's shore. Ashfur looked up, and saw Brambleclaw, rushing toward them. The sight of Brambleclaw brought all of Ashfur's negative feelings rushing back.

Ashfur narrowed his eyes at Brambleclaw, but Hawkfrost bounded between them.

"Sorry I'm late, Hawkfrost, I–" Brambleclaw cut himself off when he noticed Ashfur standing behind Hawkfrost. Brambleclaw narrowed his eyes with annoyance. "What is *he* doing here?"

Hawkfrost turned to Ashfur. "You should go."

Ashfur was speechless. He hesitated for a moment, but then he started scrambling on his paws and running away.

Was that embarrassment in Hawkfrost's voice? It was hard to recognize the insecure tone in the normally content cat's voice.

Ashfur stopped running for a moment, to catch his breath. He turned toward the border, seeing Brambleclaw and Hawkfrost talking with each other. He couldn't make out what they were saying, but it wasn't any of Ashfur's business.

I should leave, Ashfur thought. He started making his way to ThunderClan camp.

But for once, during the past quarter-moon, Ashfur's thoughts were not on Squirrelflight. They were on Hawkfrost. There was something warm and comfortable about the way Hawkfrost gazed at him and the way that sat next to each other. Whatever it was, Ashfur hoped that it wouldn't be the last time he saw Hawkfrost.

~

I hope you enjoyed the first chapter! This might seem slow at first, but trust me, things are going to unravel quickly in the next chapter. There might be a little bit of angst, who knows? Either way, I'm excited to write the next chapter.

Chapter Two

A/N: I am so, so sorry for my inactivity! I promise I'll keep writing more chapters soon, I'm just experiencing a bit of writers' block at the moment. I hope you enjoy this chapter!

Ashfur stepped out of the warriors' den and stretched as his jaws gaped in a yawn. He blinked the sleep from his eyes, and gave his pelt a quick shake. He looked around the ThunderClan camp, and his gaze rested on Brambleclaw and Squirrelflight.

The two of them looked happy and affectionate toward each other as they laughed and joked. Ashfur couldn't make out what they were saying, but he felt a stab of jealousy as Squirrelflight playfully nudged Brambleclaw. Brambleclaw rested his chin on her forehead.

Ashfur gave his head a quick shake, letting out a low growl. *I don't need that stupid she-cat anyways.*

But, as much as Ashfur tried to convince himself otherwise, he couldn't help but wish it was him instead of Brambleclaw who Squirrelflight was nuzzling.

"Ashfur?"

Ashfur jumped, startled at the sudden voice coming from behind him. He turned around to see Brambleclaw, with Squirrelflight standing a few mouse-lengths behind him.

Ashfur tried to keep his voice level. "What do you want?"

Brambleclaw blinked. "Could you join the hunting patrol at sunhigh?"

Ashfur stifled a snort of annoyance. *Of course, now that he's deputy,*

he thinks he knows everything and gets to boss everyone around.

"No, thanks," Ashfur hissed impatiently. "Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go hunting."

Brambleclaw's jaws gaped open in surprise. "Ashfur, I-"

"Hey, Ashfur, that's not fair!" Squirrelflight broke in. "Brambleclaw is the deputy! You can't just say 'no' to a patrol. If he tells you to-"

She was cut off as Ashfur thrust his muzzle in her face so they were only a whisker apart. Ashfur curled his lips back in a snarl.

"Of course you're defending him," he hissed. "He's your precious mate."

Squirrelflight's jaws gaped in surprise. She looked as though she were about to say something, but before she could, Ashfur whisked around and started lumbering toward the camp entrance.

Ashfur's eyes stung with tears, but he squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head. The image of Squirrelflight brushing up against Brambleclaw continuously flashed in Ashfur's mind. *What does she even see in that bat-blind fox-heart anyways?*

Deep down, Ashfur knew he shouldn't be thinking so negatively of Brambleclaw. He was his Clanmate, much less the Clan deputy. But he could care less. Ashfur couldn't fathom what Firestar was thinking, making the son of Tigerstar the deputy of ThunderClan.

With a soft snarl, Ashfur continued treading through the forest. He paused as he heard the sound of skittering through the bushes. Instinctively, Ashfur dropped into a hunter's crouch. His jaws were slightly gaped open as he tasted the air.

The scent of mouse lingered in his nostrils. Carefully, Ashfur padded through toward the bush. He halted as it rustled once more, and out appeared a dusky mouse. Ashfur quietly took one more step toward it, then with a great kick of his hindpaws, he lurched himself at the mouse, but ended up stumbling over it. The mouse let out a squeak of alarm as it scurried away into the woods.

Ashfur got to his paws and shook bits of dirt and twigs from his fur that he had taken from the fall. *I can't even think straight,* he thought.

"That was a very ungraceful landing," came a voice.

Ashfur looked up. Hawkfrost! What was he doing here? They were nowhere near the border, so this couldn't have been a simple mistake. Hawkfrost had deliberately trespassed on ThunderClan territory.

"What are you doing here?" Ashfur hissed, although he was more worried than angry. "You're lucky it's me you ran into, or else you'd be torn to shreds."

"I wouldn't count on it," Hawkfrost said as he carelessly licked his paw and drew it across his ear. "ThunderClan is soft. Worst case scenario, I'd be sent away with a warning."

"ThunderClan *isn't* soft!" Ashfur protested. Now his hackles started to raise.

Hawkfrost sat down and tilted his head curiously. "Oh? Then why haven't you attacked me yet?"

"I was going to see if you had a good explanation to why you were trespassing on ThunderClan territory, but it seems you don't," Ashfur responded. "Why are you even this far in our territory anyways?"

"First off, I'm not *that* far into the territory," Hawkfrost mewed.

"What? Yes you-" Then Ashfur looked behind him, and let out a soft gasp. He had gone farther than he thought he had. The ThunderClan camp was out of sight.

"Secondly," Hawkfrost interrupted Ashfur's thoughts, "Brambleclaw wasn't where we were supposed to meet each other, so I figured I'd get his attention. Would you be so kind to show me where he is?"

Remembering the quarrel they had earlier, Ashfur pulled his lips back in a snarl. "He's on a hunting patrol," he growled through

gritted teeth.

"Well, I suppose I shouldn't bother him then," Hawkfrost said with a sigh as he started to walk away. Then he paused, and looked back at Ashfur. "How come you're so mad at him?"

"What? I'm not-"

"Please. I don't think it's normal to talk about a cat with your fur bristling and teeth bared unless you're angry."

Ashfur's heart twisted with grief. Part of him wanted to open up to this cat, but another part of him knew that sounded ridiculous. Hawkfrost was from RiverClan. Why should he even trust him? He should have driven Hawkfrost out without any questions asked.

"It's a long story," Ashfur eventually said. "And.. and you should probably return to RiverClan before someone catches you here. But..." Ashfur shifted his paws awkwardly. "... if you would care to hear the full story, we could meet each other tonight?"

Great StarClan! Why did I just say that? He's RiverClan and Tigerstar's son! I can't trust him! He'll probably just say no anyways! But there was a glimmer of hope in Ashfur's heart that there was finally some cat willing to listen to him.

Hawkfrost dipped his head. "At moonhigh, near the border. The first time we met." Then he disappeared into the forest.

Ashfur watched him until he was gone, and a delighted purr rumbled in his throat. *Maybe my life won't turn out so bad after all.*

Chapter Three

A/N: Mild trigger warning for suicidal thoughts

Ashfur quietly crept through the woods. Only the sound of the twigs and leaves cracking underneath his paws could be heard throughout the quiet night.

This is dumb, Ashfur thought. *Hawkfrost is a stranger. Why would he want to help me anyways?*

Suddenly, the silence was broken by the sound of skittering and scratching in the distance. Ashfur perked up his ears and froze. His jaws parted slightly as he tasted the air. *Mouse?*

Ashfur's eyes fell to the ground where, sure enough, he saw the familiar shape of a dusky-brown shape of the mouse. Immediately, he dropped into a crouch and kept his eyes fixated on the mouse. *I'm sure Hawkfrost would appreciate it if I brought fresh-kill. Do RiverClan cats even eat mice..? Agh, focus, or else...*

Ashfur flinched as his paw came down on a twig, snapping underneath him. The mouse pricked up its ears and spotted Ashfur.

"Fox-dung!" Ashfur cursed aloud as the mouse scurried away. He leapt to his paws and bounded after it. The wind whipped through his fur as he chased after the mouse.

Through the trees, the lake came into view. The moon was reflecting off of the clear water, and normally Ashfur would savor the beautiful sight, but right now he was set on catching the mouse. He was getting closer, the mouse becoming only a few whisker-lengths away from him. All it took was one pounce and soon he could have the mouse in his claws.

They were closer to the lakeshore now. Ashfur was so close to catching it. He just needed to leap. With a small *huff,* Ashfur bent his legs beneath him for a brief moment, preparing to pounce, then

took the leap.

But his pounce didn't go according to plan. As he leapt off the ground, his paw hit a large rock sticking out of the ground, causing him to go stumbling in the opposite direction.

Ashfur ungracefully tumbled down the steep hill and, before he was able to stop himself, he plunged into the lake.

The cold water seeped into every inch of his fur, making him feel heavy, until it eventually filled his eyes and nose as he sunk deeper into the cold depths of the lake. Ashfur helplessly battered his paws through the water, but to no avail. *I can't swim!*

Soon, Ashfur gave into exhaustion and let himself sink into the waters of the lake. All was silent. Peaceful, even.

I guess I die here. No cat will care. No one will bother trying to find me. Just let me drown...

All of a sudden, a loud splash cut through the dead silence. Ashfur's eyes snapped open, and he saw the silhouette of a cat swimming toward him. The cat grasped Ashfur by the scruff of the neck and soon he was being pulled to the surface.

The sweet relief of being brought to the surface of the water and taking a breath of air. Ashfur gasped desperately as he was dropped to the ground. He shakily rose to his paws, digging his claws into the ground, and he turned to see who his miraculous savior was.

"Hawkfrost?" Ashfur croaked. "Y-you saved me..."

"What in StarClan's name were you thinking?" Hawkfrost snapped, pausing for a moment to shake the water from his pelt. "Here I was, waiting for you to meet me here, when all of a sudden I saw you barreling into the lake. Did you decide you wanted to take a swim instead?"

Ashfur coughed before saying, "It was an accident. I was trying to catch a mouse but I kind of... fell?"

Hawkfrost narrowed his eyes. "How do you manage to fall in a lake

while hunting on land?"

Ashfur sheepishly looked down at his paws, averting Hawfrost's glare. "I guess I'm just that bad of a hunter."

To Ashfur's surprise, Hawkfrost let out a purr of amusement. Ashfur tilted his head at him, confused. *What's so funny? I never meant to make a joke.* But when Ashfur thought about, it did seem ridiculous, falling into the lake while trying to catch a mouse.

"Come over here," Hawkfrost said, almost in a demanding manner, patting the ground next to him. "You're going to freeze. It's best you stay close to me to conserve body heat."

"Are you..." Ashfur trailed off, before awkwardly walking over and sitting closely next to Hawkfrost. It felt weird, their pelts brushing together, but it was also strangely comforting.

For the first time that night, Ashfur took adavantage of the moment to get a good look at Hawkfrost. The moonlight tinted the tips of his dark brown fur with silver, and his icy-blue eyes matched. He was well-built, and actually rather handsome. *I'm surprised he doesn't have a mate.*

"Are you going to sit there gawking at me all night, or are you going to tell me your story like you said you would?" Hawkfrost teased, snapping Ashfur out of his trance.

"Why did you save me?" Ashfur blurted out, looking up at the taller tom.

"What?"

"Why'd you rescue me when I was drowning in the lake?"

Hawkfrost looked thoughtful for a moment. He scooted closer to Ashfur, causing Ashfur to flinch, and looked at him.

"I think," Hawkfrost started, "the better question would be, why weren't you trying to save yourself?"

"I was! I—" Ashfur cut himself off, not knowing how to explain

himself. It was true, but only partially. Ashfur *did* try to save himself at first, he just didn't know how. But he would be lying if he said that, at that moment, he wanted to live.

"Does it have to do with... whatever you're going through?" Hawkfrost pressed.

Ashfur felt his heart twist with grief. No cat had ever cared like this before, ever bothered to listen to him.

After a few moments of silence, Hawkfrost said, "Well, if you need to know, I saved you because it's my instinct. I can't really let a cat die. And besides, you seem like a good cat, Ashfur. It'd be a shame to let the world lose you."

Ashfur couldn't help but purr at Hawkfrost's response. It was the first time in a while that he actually felt happy.

"Anyways, we met here for a reason," Hawkfrost said. "What's up?"

Ashfur opened his mouth to speak, and as soon as he did, he couldn't stop. All of his words and problems came pouring out. Not just about his situation with Squirrelflight, but also about how his mother died and how he got mauled by a dog as an apprentice. Finally, there was a cat to listen to him.

"And it just felt like Squirrelflight the one good thing that happened in my life," Ashfur concluded, "and it was just... ripped away from me."

Hawkfrost nodded intently.

Ashfur dug his claws into the ground. "I just feel so *angry*. I want to make her suffer the same pain I did."

"I think that can be arranged," Hawkfrost put in.

Ashfur's eyes widened as he looked up at Hawkfrost. *Did I hear him correctly?*

"You said your mother died, correct?" Hawkfrost asked, standing up. Ashfur felt slightly disappointed at the sudden lack of warmth.

Hawkfrost paced as he continued. "Well, I have an idea. You know the fox traps along the border?"

Ashfur nodded. Where was he going with this?

"I was planning this earlier, for Brambleclaw's sake, but..." He lowered his voice. "What if we managed to trap Firestar in one?"

Ashfur gasped. "You mean... kill him?"

There was a mischievous glint in Hawkfrost's eyes. "The fox trap would take all of his lives, right?"

Ashfur pondered for a moment. Firestar was his leader, and while he was angry, he wasn't sure he would want to resort to *that.* Then again, he was Squirrelflight's father. Killing him would mean making her suffer the same way he did.

Ashfur nodded. "I'll do it."

"Okay," Hawkfrost responded. He turned his back toward Ashfur. "It's best we head out, now. Meet me here again tomorrow? We can discuss it more."

Ashfur gazed after the dark tabby. "Yes, of course."

"See you then."

Ashfur wanted to respond, but Hawkfrost has already disappeared into the depths of the forest. A purr rose in Ashfur's throat. Meeting Hawkfrost might have been the best thing that happened to him.

A/N: I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Stay tuned for the next one. There's definitely going to be more fluff in chapter four 👀

Chapter Four

Leaves crunched underneath Ashfur's paws as he walked through the forest. Crickets could be heard as he neared closer to RiverClan territory. There was lightness in his steps as he walked, as he was looking forward to meeting Hawkfrost again.

There was something about the mysterious dark tabby that drew Ashfur closer. He was the only cat that had ever cared about him, *truly* cared about him. He thought he'd had that with Squirrelflight, but if Squirrelflight cared about him, she wouldn't have chosen Brambleclaw over him.

But how do I know I can trust him, anyways? Ashfur thought. *He's Tigerstar's son, for StarClan's sake!* But as the thoughts passed through Ashfur's mind, he hardly acknowledged them. Tigerstar's son or not, it was nice to have someone who listened to him.

As Ashfur got closer to their meeting place, the sound of murmuring could be heard some distance away. Ashfur paused and pricked his ears. Perhaps it was the sound of bugs flying over the lake, was his first thought. But when he took a few steps closer, he could definitely make out words.

There were cats here, no doubt about it. But the thing that bugged Ashfur the most was that he recognized the voice of Hawkfrost. What was Hawkfrost doing with another cat?

Curiosity got to the best of him and Ashfur took a few more steps closer. He hid himself behind a tree and peeked over at the lake's shore, where he and Hawkfrost had met the first time.

Hawkfrost was there, but with another cat. *What is he doing? He said he would meet me here again tomorrow.* Ashfur's heart sank. Maybe he was wrong about Hawkfrost. Maybe Hawkfrost didn't care about him after all.

Ashfur craned his neck so he could get a closer look, and in the darkness, he recognized the cat Hawkfrost was talking with.

Brambleclaw.

Ashfur's eyes stung with tears as he stumbled backward. Of course Hawkfrost didn't care about him. Nobody cared about him, and nobody ever would, and Ashfur was stupid to think otherwise.

Through his blurry vision, he saw that his movements were noticed by Hawkfrost, but he hardly took notice of it as he darted away into the forest.

"Ashfur!" came Hawkfrost's voice from behind him as he ran. "Ashfur, please come back!"

Ashfur wanted to keep running, forever, until he was long gone, but hearing Hawkfrost's voice caused him to slow to a halt.

Ashfur stood there for a moment to catch his breath. He could see Hawkfrost behind him in his peripheral vision, but he didn't turn to face him.

"Ashfur," Hawkfrost said softly, "why did you run away from me?"

Ashfur's pelt bristled as he whipped around to face Hawkfrost. "Because you were with Brambleclaw when you said you would meet with me! I thought that maybe you cared about me, but you replaced me with him. Just like Squirrelflight."

Hawkfrost tilted his head. "Brambleclaw was just leaving. I have to visit him, too, you know. He's my brother."

Ashfur's fur flattened. Suddenly, all of his anger was replaced with guilt. Of course he should let Hawkfrost spend time with Brambleclaw. They were brothers. How could Ashfur be so selfish? Now Hawkfrost was definitely going to hate him.

"I'm so sorry," Ashfur said in barely a whisper. "I don't why I got so upset. Perhaps it's better if I just leave..."

"Hey," Hawkfrost interrupted, taking a step closer to Ashfur. "Look

at me."

Ashfur did as he was told, gazing into the icy pools that were Hawkfrost's eyes.

"I understand," Hawkfrost explained. "He hurt you. We do strange things when cats hurt us. Trust me, I know."

"You do?"

Hawkfrost looked at the ground, suddenly looking very distant. "My mother left me when I was just a kit."

"I already knew that," Ashfur said. "Most cats do. She was a rogue."

"I know, but ever since then, every time I see a cat talk about the bond they have with their mother, I just want to slash their ears," Hawkfrost growled, flexing his claws. "I know it's no cat's fault, not even Sasha's, but I still wish I could have had that same bond that most cats do."

Ashfur moved closer to Hawkfrost. He sat down next to him and brushed his pelt against his. "I'm sorry."

"There's nothing for you to apologize for." Hawkfrost looked at Ashfur. "But I want you to know, you were wrong about something."

"What's that?"

"You accused me of not caring about you, but that's not true in the slightest," Hawkfrost said. "I *do* care about you, Ashfur. You're a special cat."

With that, Hawkfrost leaned over and pressed his muzzle to the top of Ashfur's head. Ashfur flinched at first, but then reveled in the comforting feeling of Hawkfrost's touch. He leaned closer into Hawkfrost's chest fur. He had never felt so close to any cat, not even Squirrelflight, even if he barely knew Hawkfrost.

Ashfur then quickly pulled away. "I'm sorry, uh-"

"What are you sorry for?"

Ashfur felt his pelt grow hot with embarrassment. "Well, I leaned closer to you but that was probably weird..."

Hawkfrost shrugged and have his chest fur a lick. "I didn't mind it."

Ashfur awkwardly shuffled closer to Hawkfrost's side and leaned his head on his shoulder. "Then... is this okay?"

Hawkfrost purred contentedly as he rested his chin on Ashfur's head. "I like that."

Ashfur felt his fur grow hot, but this time, it wasn't out of embarassment. There was something more. Something he hadn't felt in a long time. He enjoyed this feeling.

Ashfur closed his eyes and let himself sink into Hawkfrost's soft fur. He wanted to stay here forever, close to Hawkfrost, their pelts brushing closely together, listening to the sound of his soft purrs.

So there they sat, cuddled up closely to each other, listening the forest hum around them.

Chapter Five

Ashfur awoke on the ground with the morning sun shining in his eyes. His body ached, as he hadn't slept in his nest. He stretched his jaws in a yawn and blinked the sleep from his eyes. Once he was more alert, he noticed that Hawkfrost was cuddled up next to him, asleep.

Wait, Ashfur thought anxiously. *Why am I not in my nest? What is Hawkfrost doing here?*

Then it clicked.

Oh, no, I must have fallen asleep last night when I was with Hawkfrost !

Ashfur leaned over and nosed the sleeping brown tabby. "Hawkfrost? Hawkfrost, wake up!"

Hawkfrost murmured sleepily as his eyes fluttered open. The large tabby stretched as he said, "Good morning."

"How did this happen? When did we fall asleep?" Ashfur asked frantically, rising to his paws.

"You mean when did *you* fall asleep?" Hawkfrost corrected. "You drifted off while you were leaning against my shoulder. You must have been tired last night. I didn't want to disturb you, so I stayed, and ended up falling asleep myself."

"You mean we fell asleep together on the RiverClan border?" Ashfur repeated. "Great StarClan, did any cat see us?"

Hawkfrost shrugged and bent over to lick his paw. "I don't think so."

"How are you not worried?" Ashfur pressed.

"I don't know," Hawkfrost asked. "I can come up with an excuse for

just about anything."

"Even being caught sleeping with a ThunderClan cat?"

"I'm sure I'll think of something," Hawkfrost assured him. "But you should probably be heading back to ThunderClan. Your Clanmates are probably wondering where you are."

Ashfur felt a thorn pierce his heart. He looked down at his paws. "I don't think they miss me at all. I doubt they noticed at all."

"Hey," Hawkfrost chided, nudging Ashfur. "Don't say things like that. There has to be at least one cat who would notice."

"I know, I know," Ashfur said. "But part of me doesn't want to leave."

Hawkfrost purred with amusement. "Understandable. I *am* pretty great."

"You are!" Ashfur blurted. "More than you know."

Hawkfrost flicked Ashfur's nose playfully with his tail. "I can't have you missing out on your warrior duties, but we can meet here again tonight."

"Gladly," Ashfur purred.

"Good," Hawkfrost agreed as he started to pad away. "And Ashfur?"

"Hm?"

"I hope you have a good rest of your day," Hawkfrost told him, before hurrying off into the woods.

You too, Ashfur added to himself. He gazed after Hawkfrost before padding back to ThunderClan territory.

~

The rest of Ashfur's day was boring. As he expected, no one had really missed him while he was away, unless you included

Brambleclaw, who was more angry than worried that he had showed up late to patrol. It was hard for Ashfur to make a decent excuse, but luckily, there was no need. No cat wanted to hear what he had to say anyways.

"Come on, Ashfur, we're going on a hunting patrol," Brambleclaw ordered. "Along with Thornclaw, Cloudtail, and Brackenfur."

Ashfur felt his pelt prickle irritably along his spine. He had always had a disliking for Brambleclaw ever since he stole Squirrelflight away from him, but now that he knew that he was secretly seeing Hawkfrost, it made him hate him even more.

Why am I so angry that he's seeing Hawkfrost? Ashfur thought. *I shouldn't accuse him for being disloyal. I sneak out to see him, too.*

"Come on, Ashfur," Brambleclaw called, snapping Ashfur out of his thoughts. "The fresh-kill pile is getting smaller, and we need to catch some prey. We don't have time for you to be daydreaming all day."

A low snarl rumbled in Ashfur's throat as he padded up to join the four other toms. Brambleclaw had only been deputy for a quarter moon, yet he was acting like he had control over all of the other cats. *It's not like you're Clan leader.*

However, as the five of them padded through the forest, Ashfur started to think. *Well, I suppose that Brambleclaw will be leader once Hawkfrost kills him in the fox trap.*

It was a rather unsettling thought, Brambleclaw becoming leader. But if killing Firestar was the way to make Squirrelflight suffer the same way he did, then it would be worth it in the end. Then an idea popped into his head. *Maybe somehow I could kill Brambleclaw once he's leader and make Squirreflight suffer even more...*

Then he shook the thought away. *What have I become? I can't kill Brambleclaw. That would make me a murderer, and I know that Hawkfrost is close to him. I don't want to make Hawkfrost suffer.*

"Ashfur!" Once again, Brambleclaw's mew cut through Ashfur's

thoughts. He looked at Brambleclaw, who was narrowing his eyes, annoyed. "What is with you today? Are you even listening to a word I'm saying?"

Ashfur snorted. "Of course I am!" That was a lie, but he wasn't going to admit that to Brambleclaw. "Quit acting like you're so high and mighty just because you're the Clan deputy! You're not the leader, for StarClan's sake!"

Ashfur gasped, suddenly realizing that his outburst had caused Cloudtail, Thornclaw, and Brackenfur to glare at him questioningly. *Why did I say that?*

"Alright, fine," Brambleclaw mewed softly, clearly trying to contain his anger. "If you think you're so much better than I am, can you repeat to me what I just told you to do?"

Ashfur's mouth hung open as he wordlessly stared at Brambleclaw. He hadn't been listening to him. *For StarClan's sake, why am I so stupid?*

"That's what I thought," Brambleclaw mewed stiffly. "Next time, think before you challenge your deputy. Go back to camp, Ashfur. We'll handle the hunting patrol ourselves."

Ashfur opened his mouth to protest, but no words came out. Instead, he bushed out his pelt and hissed at Brambleclaw before turning to the ThunderClan camp. *I didn't want to go hunting, anyways.*

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A/N: Sorry there wasn't too much fluff in this one. I'll try to add some more HawkxAsh next chapter!

Chapter Six

Ashfur sat in the warriors' den, half-heartedly gnawing at a dead mouse in his paws. The rest of the cats were gathered round the fresh-kill pile, sharing tongues and having a good time. Ashfur seethed with envy as he noticed Brambleclaw presenting a rabbit to Squirrelflight, and the two of them lovingly touching noses.

Whatever, Ashfur thought. His whiskers twitched irritably as he took another bite of his tasteless mouse. *Nightfall is drawing closer, and I'll get to see Hawkfrost again.*

Ashfur swiped his tongue across his lips after taking his last bite of his prey, then he rose from his nest. *I think I'll go wait by the border right now. There's nothing better to do.*

Ashfur peered out of the warriors' den and saw the sun setting through the trees. Hawkfrost had told him to meet him by the border at dusk. Dusk was almost here, so Ashfur might as well use his time to walk to the border and wait for him there.

He gave his pelt a quick shake, sending dust flying in all directions. Ashfur cautiously glanced around the clearing. There were so many cats, and he was bound to get noticed. Then again, no cat ever seemed to notice him anyways.

Ashfur slinked past the several cats in the clearing. He quietly padded through the ThunderClan camp, almost nearing the woods outside the camp, until he heard a sharp voice call, "Ashfur!"

Ashfur whipped around and saw Brambleclaw padding toward him. Ashfur suppressed an eye-roll as he saw Brambleclaw's stern expression. *What will it take to get to get this stupid cat to leave me alone?*

"Where do you think you're going?" Brambleclaw pressed, sitting down in front of Ashfur. "Why are you leaving camp?"

Ashfur stifled an exasperated sigh. "I'm not a *kit,* Brambleclaw. I'm allowed to leave camp when I have the time on my paws. It's dusk, it's not like I have any warrior duties."

"Unless you can tell me where you're going, I won't allow you to leave camp." Brambleclaw's tail twitched expectantly as his glare burned into Ashfur's pelt.

"Why? It's not like leaving camp is against the warrior code," Ashfur argued.

"Don't think that I haven't noticed you sneaking out lately!" Brambleclaw hissed. "Where exactly have you been going? Are you seeing another cat? Because that *is* against the warrior code!"

Ashfur tried to keep his fur flat. *What a hypocrite. Hawkfrost tells me you visit him all the time. How dare you come over here and question my loyalty when you're visiting Hawkfrost just as much as I am!* But he kept his thoughts to himself. If Ashfur told Brambleclaw that he knew he was seeing Hawkfrost, Brambleclaw would question why he knew that, and then Ashfur wouldn't be able to make a good excuse to why he knew.

"I've been hunting," Ashfur explained simply. "I need time to clear my thoughts. Is that such a crime?"

Brambleclaw looked as though he wanted to say more, but instead he rose to his paws and padded away.

"You better be back by nightfall," Brambleclaw called over his shoulder.

What? Nightfall? That's not fair! But Ashfur didn't argue. He just wanted to see Hawkfrost, even if it was for a moment.

Ashfur bounded into the forest, following the scent of RiverClan to the border. With each step, he felt his frustration and jealousy wash away with the thought that he was going to see Hawkfrost again.

As he neared the RiverClan border, he saw Hawkfrost's dark figure, still as stone, sitting and waiting for him. A purr rose in Ashfur's throat as he ran faster to join Hawkfrost at the border.

Hawkfrost noticed Ashfur running toward him, and he stood up and purred. Ashfur rushed over to Hawkfrost and joined him at the border.

"Hello, Ashfur," Hawkfrost greeted, his blue eyes glittering with friendliness.

"Hi," Ashfur squeaked, feeling his fur grow hot. *Why am I acting like this? Why is my pelt growing hot with embarrassment?* Ashfur shook his head.

"Are you alright?" Hawkfrost asked, frowning.

"Yeah, I just-" Ashfur paused to sit down next to Hawkfrost. Finally, he could sit with him in peace. But then he remembered Brambleclaw's words. *You better be back by nightfall.* Ashfur's excitement and happiness started to fade away. "Well, not really."

"What's the matter?" Hawkfrost asked, scooting next to Ashfur. Their pelts brushed together just slightly, and it sent a shiver up Ashfur's spine.

"It's Brambleclaw." Ashfur didn't know how Hawkfrost would react. They were brothers after all, and Ashfur was aware of how much Hawkfrost cared for him. "He's just been so bossy lately. He treats me like a kit. He caught me trying to leave camp, and he said I'm supposed to be back by nightfall."

Ashfur expected Hawkfrost to jump to Brambleclaw's defense, but instead, he gazed at the sun that was just barely peaking over the hills. "Nightfall? That's so soon."

"It is." Ashfur was distracted by Hawkfrost for a moment, wanting nothing more than to just rest his head on his shoulder. *What? Why am I feeling like this?*

"Well, that's shame," Hawkfrost murmured, standing up and walking away. Ashfur suddenly felt very cold without Hawkfrost at his side. *No! Please come back!*

"You should head back now," Hawkfrost said. "Night will come soon. Why don't you meet me here at moonhigh, while every cat is

sleeping?"

Ashfur nodded sadly. He wanted to spend more time with Hawkfrost. *Stupid Brambleclaw.*

"I'll see you later," Hawkfrost said, walking further away.

"Yeah." *No! Don't leave!* "See you later."

Ashfur's heart sank as Hawkfrost darted away into the woods. He wished he could have spent more time with Hawkfrost. He knew he was going to see him at moonhigh, but he wanted to spend time with Hawkfrost *now.*

Why do I want to spend so much time with him, anyways? Ashfur thought as he started trudging through the forest. *I just feel so... attached to him. Every time I'm with him, I feel so comfortable. I haven't felt this way since...*

Ashfur stopped in his tracks as he came to a sudden realization. He hadn't felt this way since Squirrelflight. Squirrelflight? He was in love with her. Could it mean...

Ashfur's heart soared at the thought, but there was no denying it.

He was in love with Hawkfrost.

A/N: Oohie. Things got spicy. Lucky for you all, the next chapter should be out shortly since I have LOADS more time to write now. So stay tuned!

Chapter Seven

A/N: Hey everyone! I just want to get two things out of the way. First of all, thank you for all the reads and votes! I never expected this dumb little fanfic to get as popular as it did. Second of all, this fic is nearing an end! I'd say there are about two or three more chapters until it's finished. After this, I want to write another warrior cats ship-based story again. So please, it would help me a ton if you commented some of your favorite ships in warrior cats that you would like to see written as a full-fanfic like this one! I only ask that you keep the ships appropriate. I won't write about any pedophilic or incestuous ships. Also, I'd prefer non-canon ships, since you can read about canon ships in the books. Thank you! Now, into the story!

Ashfur tossed and turned in his nest, the thought clinging to his fur like a burr he couldn't shake off. *I'm in love with Hawkfrost?* He couldn't even comprehend the thought. But looking back, he had always wanted to be closer to Hawkfrost in the way that he wanted to be closer to Squirrelflight. Maybe even closer than he wanted with Squirrelflight.

"I'm in love with Hawkfrost," Ashfur whispered to himself. Just saying it made him feel more relaxed, like he had finally come to terms with himself. Of course, there was the obvious- Hawkfrost was a tom. A *RiverClan* tom. He couldn't bear the thought of possibly losing Hawkfrost.

I have to tell him, Ashfur thought. *It's better than just keeping it to myself.*

Ashfur lifted his head from his nest. Through the cracks of the warriors' den, he could see the moon hanging high in the sky, igniting the indigo sky with silver. *Moonhigh.*

Now was Ashfur's chance to confess his feelings to Hawkfrost. *He's so amazing. So much better than me. I'm certain that he won't feel the*

same way... but, it has to be done.

Ashfur rolled over in his nest and stood up, shaking off the bits of moss that stuck to his fur. He gingerly tiptoed out of the warriors' den, making sure he wouldn't wake any cat. Then he pried his way out of the warriors' den. *If Brambleclaw catches me, I'm crow-food!*

Ashfur sneakily padded out of the ThunderClan camp. He looked over his shoulder to make no cat was watching him. When he knew he was alone, he bolted out of camp and rushed through the forest.

His paws felt lighter than air as he ran to Hawkfrost. Now that he had finally admitted to himself that he had feelings for Hawkfrost, he wanted to see him more than ever. He had a boost of confidence, and he was going to tell Hawkfrost how he felt.

Ashfur neared the RiverClan border, and he felt even more happy as he ran through the woods.

There was Hawkfrost, waiting for him like always.

Ashfur slowed to a sudden halt as he saw Hawkfrost. The dark tabby looked at him warmly, and his friendly gaze sent butterflies in Ashfur's stomach.

"There you are," Hawkfrost purred delightedly, padding closer to Ashfur. Ashfur was starstruck at the sight of the sleek dark tabby. The moon kindled his fur, making him look even more handsome than he already did. It took every ounce of self-control for Ashfur to not leap at Hawkfrost and bury his head in his chest fur. "I've been waiting."

"I need to tell you something," Ashfur blurted out. His heart hammered inside his chest. *Here goes nothing.*

Hawkfrost pricked up his ears, interested. "What is it?" Hawkfrost asked as he sat down and curled his tail around his paws.

"I... uh..." Ashfur looked in all directions until his gaze landed on the ground. He wouldn't meet Hawkfrost's eyes. "I..."

"Ashfur, you know you can tell me anything," Hawkfrost pressed.

Can I, though? Ashfur felt as though his insides were twisting with anxiety and embarrassment. This was harder than he thought it was going to be. It seemed so easy with Squirrelflight. Perhaps that was because she was a ThunderClan she-cat.

"I... figured out a way to trap Firestar in the fox traps," Ashfur said eventually. *I'll tell him later. I still need time to gather the courage to confess my feelings to him.*

"Oh?" Hawkfrost stood and padded closer to Ashfur, causing his heart to thud even faster. "And what is that?"

"Um..." Ashfur thought for a moment as he shifted his paws nervously. His ears grew hot with embarrassment. "I was thinking, you could wait for him at the border. And I'll deliver the message that there's a... a situation, going on at the RiverClan border."

Hawkfrost sat down next to Ashfur. "That is a good idea, and we'll follow that plan. But, Ashfur, I have a feeling that wasn't what you were going to tell me."

Ashfur started to tremble. He was so nervous. Now he had no choice but to tell Hawkfrost about his feelings.

"Alright." Ashfur looked at the ground. Surely, once he confessed, Hawkfrost was going to hate him. He was going to push Ashfur away and tell him that he was disgusting and that he never wanted to see him again. "Hawkfrost, the truth is..."

Ashfur forced himself to look up into Hawkfrost's eyes. Hawkfrost was expectantly waiting to hear what Ashfur had to say. *You want to hear what I'm going to say. But once I say it, you'll wish you had never heard it. You'll never want to see me again.*

"The truth is that, you're an amazing cat," Ashfur started, "and I love spending time with you. I love visiting you at the borders. It's the highlight of my night, and I always look forward to it."

Hawkfrost purred. "Well, I don't blame you. I *am* pretty amazing."

"You are!" Ashfur rambled on. "And that's why..."

Here it comes.

"That's why I'm... I have feelings for you."

Ashfur scooted away from Hawkfrost. He looked away for a moment, then back at him, trying to read his gaze. Hawkfrost just stared at him blankly, as though trying to process what Ashfur had said.

"Feelings? What do you mean by that?"

Ashfur took a shaky breath. "I mean, I'm in love with you, Hawkfrost."

Hawkfrost's jaws gaped open. He said nothing, only stared at Ashfur with a shocked look on his face.

"I- I'm sorry," Ashfur stammered, jumping to his paws. "I should go. I shouldn't have told you. I'm sorry."

As Ashfur started to walk away, he felt a paw press down on his tail, keeping him from being able to leave. Ashfur spun around, seeing that Hawkfrost was stepping on his tail and holding him back.

"Ashfur, wait," Hawkfrost said. "Don't go. Please."

Sheepishly, Ashfur sat down in front of Hawkfrost, but still wouldn't meet his eyes. Suddenly, he felt Hawkfrost's warm tongue rasp across his cheek. Ashfur flinched, and looked up at Hawkfrost.

"What-"

"I think I'm in love with you, too," Hawkfrost said.

Ashfur was dumbfounded. Millions of different emotions whirled through his mind. Happiness, love, confusion.

"You- with me?" Ashfur asked, trying to suppress a purr. "Why?"

Hawkfrost purred as he brushed up against Ashfur. "Well, I think you're cute. And fun to be around. You're also a really good listener.

Not to mention, you have a good heart."

Ashfur blinked. "You really think so?"

"Of course," Hawkfrost purred.

Ashfur was overjoyed. He bounded toward Hawkfrost and rested his head on his chest, something that he had been wanting to do for ages now. Hawkfrost rested his chin on Ashfur's head and curled his tail around his body.

"So, does this make us mates?" Ashfur asked, his voice slightly muffled through Hawkfrost's fur.

"I suppose it does," Hawkfrost replied, licking Ashfur in between his ears.

Ashfur purred. Finally, he felt happy. Happier than he had ever been. Because Hawkfrost loved him back, and they were happy together.

Chapter Eight

A/N: This chapter is literally only fluff so I hope you enjoy it. :)

Ashfur's head leaned against Hawkfrost's shoulder as they lay together. He felt Hawkfrost's tail slip next to his tail, twining their tails together. His gentle touch sent a shiver up Ashfur's spine.

Suddenly, Ashfur's ears pricked up as he heard scuffling in the trees. He pulled away from Hawkfrost and parted his jaws to taste the air. *Squirrel.* Ashfur stifled a purr. Hawkfrost would be impressed with him if he caught them something to eat.

Do RiverClan eat squirrels? Ashfur thought. *Oh well, I'm sure Hawkfrost won't mind it.*

Ashfur stood up and quietly padded away from Hawkfrost. He narrowed his eyes, and in the dark of the night, he could see the silhouette of a squirrel scampering through the trees. Ashfur dropped into a hunting crouch as he carefully tiptoed closer toward the squirrel.

"Hey, what're you doing?" Hawkfrost asked.

"Hunting," Ashfur whispered, silencing Hawkfrost with a small flick of his tail. "I thought I could catch something for us."

Hawkfrost purred and said quietly, "You know I don't eat squirrels."

"Have you ever tried one?" Ashfur asked, turning his head away from his prey for a moment to look at Hawkfrost.

Hawkfrost thoughtfully licked his paw and drew it across his ear. "No, I suppose not. I guess it will be my first time."

Ashfur turned back to the squirrel and inched closer to it. It had skittered a little further away from him, but Ashfur still had the chance to catch it. His mouth watered as its musky scent filled his

nose. He'd realized he hadn't eaten in a while. Ashfur couldn't wait to taste the squirrel's flesh in his jaws.

All of a sudden, something landed on top of Ashfur, pushing him out of his hunting crouch and pinning him to the ground. The scuffle had startled the squirrel, causing it to scurry up into a tree.

Ashfur's whiskers twitched irritably as he saw Hawkfrost, playfully pinning him to the ground and pressing his paw against Ashfur's chest. "What did you do that for? I was so close to catching it!"

Hawkfrost purred with amusement as he leaned in and touched his nose to Ashfur's. "Sorry, I couldn't resist."

Ashfur blushed as Hawkfrost let go of him. "Who am I kidding? I can't stay mad at you." Then, he pressed his muzzle into Hawkfrost's cheek.

Hawkfrost brushed his tail underneath Ashfur's chin, his blue eyes glittering with adoration. "You're cute, you know that?"

Ashfur felt butterflies flutter in his stomach as he bashfully pawed at the ground. "Do you *really* think that about me?"

Hawkfrost frowned and tilted his head. He padded over to Ashfur and sat down next to him. "Of course I do," he assured him. "Why would you doubt that I do?"

Ashfur shrugged. "I guess after having my heart broken by Squirrelflight, I've been starting to doubt that any cat would ever love me."

"Hey, don't think about what that no-good she-cat thinks," Hawkfrost told him, gently nudging Ashfur with his muzzle. Ashfur purred contentedly as he leaned in closer to Hawkfrost. "It's just us now," Hawkfrost went on. "And I love you the way you are."

Ashfur felt his fur grow hot. "You *love* me?"

Hawkfrost rested his chin on top of Ashfur's head. "Of course I do. Don't you ever forget that."

Ashfur closed his eyes and relished in Hawkfrost's gentle touch. "You're right. I should stop thinking about Squirrelflight. She means nothing to me anymore."

"I know it takes time to get over heartbreak," Hawkfrost said before giving him a gentle lick between the ears. "Squirrelflight was close to you. But I hope that I can be the one the heal your broken heart, Ashfur."

"Oh, Hawkfrost." Ashfur pulled away from him to look at him in the eyes. "You already have. I mean it."

Hawkfrost closed his eyes and touched his nose to Ashfur's. "It means a lot to me that you think that."

All of a sudden, Hawkfrost pulled away. Ashfur flinched and gave Hawkfrost a hurtful look. *Why are you recoiling? Do you not love me after all?*

"I'm sorry." Hawkfrost shifted his paws awkwardly. "It's just... I've never let myself look vulnerable in front of any cat. I'm not usually... ah, what's the word... sensitive, if that makes sense."

Ashfur came up behind Hawkfrost and rested his head on his shoulder, looking at him pleadingly. "You don't have to be worried about that. It's just us." *Please, don't leave me.*

"I know, it sounds stupid," Hawkfrost said, pulling away and looking at Ashfur. He almost looked guilty for what he said. "But I've never been in love before now. I don't want to mess things up." he lowered his voice. "I really do love you, Ashfur."

Suddenly, Ashfur felt more confident with himself. "Then you don't have to worry about what I think of you. I will never leave you."

Hawkfrost purred and rested his muzzle on top of Ashfur's head. "I know. I'm sorry." He then shuffled over and sat down in front of Ashfur. "Now, let's talk about our plan to catch Firestar in the fox trap. Should we do it tomorrow."

Ashfur nodded. "Yes, tomorrow will work. I'll tell Firestar that a RiverClan cat wants to meet him at the border to deliver a message.

Then, I'll leave the rest up to you."

Hawkfrost looked up at the sky. The sun was starting to rise, sending golden beams glittering over the lake. "You should go now before you get caught."

Ashfur gave Hawkfrost a quick lick behind the ear. "Goodbye. I'll see you tomorrow." He started toward the ThunderClan border, but after saying a quick "I love you" over his shoulder.

Hawkfrost nodded at him quickly before disappearing into the forest. Ashfur felt his heart grow warm. Things were starting to go his way.

A/N: I apologize in advance for what's going to happen in the next chapter.

Chapter Nine

A/N: It's been a hot second since I've updated, huh? Well, without further ado, here's the final chapter! This is the last chapter of this fic, but fret not, because I plan on writing different warriors-related fics. I'm probably either going to do Squirrelflight/Moonlight or Graystripe/Firestar next. I also plan on writing an original story featuring my warriors OCs. But enough of all that, you all are here for HawkAsh. Enjoy the chapter!

TW // Graphic depictions of violence and gore

Ashfur quietly crept through the bushes along the lakeshore. He tried to keep his breathing steady, but his heart was racing. At any moment now, Firestar was going to be caught in the fox trap. Then Squirrelflight would suffer the same pain he did.

Ashfur's tail twitched. Was he really sure he wanted to do this? It had just been a mere idea floating in the back of his head, but now, they were actually executing his plan. This was when it was going to become real. Firestar was going to die.

Suddenly, soft pawsteps sounded through the woods. Through the branches of the bush, Ashfur could see the bottom of Hawkfrost's dark paws. Hawkfrost sat down and waited expectantly. Ashfur stifled a purr at the sight of him.

He was soon followed by another set of pawsteps. Ashfur couldn't see the tom's face through the bushes, but the undeniably orange paws could belong to none other than the ThunderClan leader.

Snap.

Ashfur flinched at the sharp sound, followed by a loud yelp. Firestar fell to the ground, and the stench of blood started to waft through the air. A red stream started to trickle down the ground. Ashfur couldn't see Hawkfrost, but he could hear his triumphant purrs.

"Help!" came Firestar's desperate, choked out cry. "Someone, help me!"

Ashfur felt a jab of pity toward the ThunderClan leader. He never thought he would ever be capable of murder, let alone murdering his own leader. But Ashfur shook the feeling away. *It's what Squirrelflight deserves.* Besides, he didn't murder Firestar, at least not on his own. The fox trap did.

Loud pawsteps thundered through the forest, these ones being more quick. It was Brambleclaw. Ashfur felt a prickle of annoyance when Brambleclaw entered the scene, but tried to brush it off as he knew that Brambleclaw was important to Hawkfrost.

"Hawkfrost?" Brambleclaw asked. "What is this?"

"You must let him die so you can take his place as leader," Hawkfrost replied simply.

"No!" Brambleclaw argued. "I can't let him die! Hawkfrost, I want to become leader, but this is not the way to do so."

Ashfur's pelt bristled. *Brambleclaw is getting in the way of our plan! What if something goes wrong?*

"It *is* the way!" Hawkfrost retorted. "Let him die!"

"Brambleclaw," Firestar gasped. "Help me. Please."

For a long moment, everything went silent. Brambleclaw stood still. Ashfur's heart hammered. *Brambleclaw, please don't ruin this for me.*

Then, with a yowl, Brambleclaw lunged at Hawkfrost with his claws unsheathed. Ashfur gasped, then covered his mouth with his tail. *No! This was not how this was supposed to go!*

Hawkfrost and Brambleclaw scuffled on the ground, battering their claws at each other and sending droplets of blood flying in all directions. Hawkfrost flipped Brambleclaw over on his back and firmly pinned him to the ground.

Ashfur's ears pricked up. Maybe this would work out after all.

Hawkfrost sunk his teeth into Brambleclaw's shoulder and tore a chunk of flesh away. Brambleclaw hissed in agony and helplessly raked his claws across Hawkfrost's chest, but to no avail.

Things were looking hopeful. Hawkfrost was going to kill Brambleclaw, and Firestar would die in the fox trap. Maybe things would turn out *better* than Ashfur had originally intended.

But suddenly, Brambleclaw escaped Hawkfrost's grasp and yanked the stick from the fox trap out of the ground. Hawkfrost charged toward him, but before he could do anything, Brambleclaw stabbed Hawkfrost right in the neck.

No! Ashfur wanted to cry out. He wanted to rush over and help Hawkfrost. But it felt as though his paws were cemented to the ground. Every inch of his body trembled, too hard for him to move.

Blood pooled from the wound in Hawkfrost's neck as the life drained from his face. Hawkfrost collapsed to the ground, only leaving Brambleclaw standing over his dead body.

Ashfur's heart twisted with grief. It was nearly impossible for him to process what had just happened. Then, in place of the grief came a rush of anguish, despair, and rage. Ashfur wanted nothing more than to sink his teeth and claws into Brambleclaw's throat, feeling the sensation of his warm blood oozing out of his body, feeling the life slowly drain from him. He wanted to make Brambleclaw suffer from the most painful and agonizing death. He wanted him to feel the pain that Hawkfrost felt, that *he* felt, and ten times more.

But he didn't.

Ashfur just trembled and watched, still as a stone.

He heard the shifting of paws come from another cat, and a bright orange pelt came and brushed against Brambleclaw's. *Firestar.* He was alive.

Ashfur dug his claws into the ground. *No, no, no, everything is going wrong! Why does everything in my life go wrong? I hate this. I hate myself. I hate every cat in this stupid Clan.*

"Brambleclaw," Firestar spoke through heavy, exhausted breaths, "you saved my life."

The sound of another cats pawsteps sounded through the woods, this time lighter and swifter. Another flame-colored pelt that matched Firestar's appeared next to Brambleclaw.

Ashfur recognized the sweet scent of the new-arriving cat as Squirrelflight, and a low growl rumbled in his throat. She comfortingly pressed against Brambleclaw, and the two of them walked away together with their tails twinned, Firestar trailing close behind them.

The world seemed as though it were underwater-- slow-moving, heavy, and suffocating. Ashfur felt his eyes burn with tears and sadness clawed at his stomach. He buried his face in his paws and dug his claws into the sides of his head, hoping that his loud thoughts and immense grief would all slow down.

Please, let me wake up and find that this is all a terrible dream.

He lifted his head, and saw that he was still in the same place. Hidden in a bush, viewing Hawkfrost's lifeless body through the narrow openings of the bush.

With trembling paws, Ashfur stepped out of the bush, and he saw him clearly for the first time that evening.

Hawkfrost.

A sharp stick was jabbed into his neck and stained with dark streaks of blood. Hawkfrost's face was frozen in the same angry, determined expression he had as he died, except now his eyes were dull and lifeless.

And yet, with the little amount of hope he had left in him, Ashfur gently nudged Hawkfrost's body and murmured, "Please, wake up. You're the strongest cat I know, Hawkfrost. You can't go this easily."

There came no response.

An overwhelming amount of sadness weighed down on Ashfur and

tore at his heart like a tiger's claw. Ashfur thrust his muzzle into Hawkfrost's chest fur, feeling the softness of his touch for one last time.

Hawkfrost's fur was no longer warm and comforting, but still and stone-cold. He was gone. The light of Ashfur's life was gone.

Ashfur raised his head from Hawkfrost's body and glared up into the sky, which was tinted a dark orange from sunset. He opened his jaws and let out a loud wail into the open.

"No!"

-

Epilogue

The heat crept up Ashfur's pelt. The fire was roaring around him, making it so loud he could barely hear his own thoughts. Behind him stood Squirrelflight's kits, looking around with terrified, helpless expressions on their faces.

Ashfur had been waiting for this moment for years. The moment he could finally get revenge on Squirrelflight, and avenge Hawkfrost.

Squirrelflight stood in front of Ashfur, challenging him, but Ashfur could see the fear behind her eyes. He wanted to laugh. Finally, she would experience the pain that he felt, all those moons ago.

"Your quarrel with Brambleclaw has to stop!" she demanded over the noisiness of the fire. "Too many moons have passed. You have to accept that I'm Brambleclaw's mate, not yours."

"My quarrel was never with Brambleclaw!" Ashfur retorted. *It's not about you, either! Stop making everything about yourself!* "It's not his fault that he fell for a faithless she-cat. My quarrel is with you, Squirrelflight."

In the corner of his eye, Ashfur could see her kits stirring. A purr rumbled in his throat. *Good. My plan is working.*

Looking back, Ashfur would've never seen himself accomplishing such a thing, but here he was. Of course, he hadn't come up with the idea all by himself. Hawkfrost had occasionally walked in his dreams, convincing Ashfur to get revenge and take back what he had lost.

"I know you think I've never forgiven Brambleclaw for stealing you

from me, but you're wrong," he went on. *Stealing you from me wasn't the only thing Brambleclaw did to me.* But Ashfur wasn't about to open up about his forbidden relationship with Hawkfrost to Squirrelflight. Not now.

"My quarrel is with *you,* Squirrelflight. It always has been."

Squirrelflight looked stunned. "Ashfur, all of this was moons ago. I had no idea you were still upset."

At that moment, Ashfur could feel a cool breeze brush past him, even in the heat of the flames. He didn't have to look in order to know it was Hawkfrost, standing beside him. Guiding him.

"Upset?" Ashfur hissed. "Squirrelflight, I'm not upset. You have no idea how much pain I'm in. It's like being cut open every day, bleeding out onto the stones. I can't believe you failed to see the blood."

Squirrelflight took a step forward, attempting to save her kits, but Ashfur hissed and pushed her away.

"Stay there!" he demanded. "I can't believe you couldn't see how much you hurt me. Who do you think sent the message to Firestar to go down to the lake, where the fox trap was? I wanted him to die, to take your father away so you could learn the real meaning of pain."

For the first time, Ashfur's moment of triumph wavered as he remembered Hawkfrost. His heart twisted with grief.

"Brambleclaw saved Firestar then." *And killed Hawkfrost.* "But he's not here now. He's not here, but your kits are. If you watch them die, you'll know the same pain that I felt."

Ashfur tried to read her expression. There was something there; something he couldn't identify. Was it pain? Rage? Confusion?

Tension burned between the two of them for what seemed like days, until Squirrelflight simply said, "Kill them, then. If you want to hurt me, you'll have to find a better way. They aren't my kits."

Out of all the possible outcomes Ashfur imagined to arise from this situation, this was the last thing that he had expected. What did Squirrelflight mean?

"You're lying," he accused.

"No, I'm not. Did you see me give birth? Nurse them? Stay in the nursery until they were apprenticed? No."

"I fooled all of you, even Brambleclaw. They are not mine."

"And no cat in the Clan knows?" As Ashfur started to challenge her, a new plan started to arise.

"No. They're all as blind as you to the truth."

"What do you think will happen when I tell them, then?" Maybe Ashfur couldn't hurt her by killing them, but he could hurt her in a different way. Destroy her reputation, take away her mate, maybe even have her exiled. "Will your Clanmates let you stay in ThunderClan, knowing that they let you lie to them? To Brambleclaw, to your sister, to Firestar?"

"You'll tell them?" Squirrelflight's voice was sharp with pain, and Ashfur was sure that he had her now.

"Do you really think I won't? I can still make you lose what you love most. Brambleclaw will want nothing to do with you. I will let these cats live, but you're a fool to think that I'll keep your secret."

With that, Ashfur victoriously jumped off the ledge. While this didn't go to plan, he now had something that would ruin Squirrelflight's life forever.

"I did it, Hawkfrost," he murmured under his breath. "I avenged you."

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A/N: Anyways, because I was gone for so long, and since a lot of you didn't like the ending, I decided to post this as a little treat for you guys. Hope you enjoyed it!

Announcement

Hey guys! Last chapter I promise, but I have an announcement to make. First of, thank you for over 7k reads! I can't believe that there are over 7,000 people who wanted to read this funky little fanfic about gay cats that I wrote. Secondly, I thought it might be worth mentioning that I now have a warrior cats one-shot series up, where you can request warrior cats ships for me to write a one-shot about! So if that seems like something you'd be interested in reading, feel free to check it out!

-Rousey